Mme. Ganna Walska to Sing With Chicago Opera Company

To Make Another Effort to Let the Public Hear Her—Col. Savage Wanted to Hire American Singers, but They Wouldn't Let Him.

By LUCIEN CLEVES.

IT may have been more or less disturbing for Mme. Ganna Walska to have temperamental orchestral conductors interfering with her rehearsals while she was trying to prepare "Zaza" for production in Chicago, but she is not too discouraged to make another effort to let the Chicago public see what she can accomplish as an opera singer when there are no such disturbing conditions.

The beautiful soprano, who is still in Paris, has been engaged to sing in "Manon" at the Chicago Auditorium during the engagement of the company. Mme. Walska has been studying this work all summer under Alexander Casselmans, formerly one of the coaches of the Chicago Opera Company but now teaching in Paris. In addition to her preparation to do justice to the musical side of the role Mme. Walska has bought the most beautiful costumes obtainable in Paris. Then she is to wear jewels which will quite throw into the shade the garniture of any previous interpreter of the part.

Mme. Walska had, of course, the liberty of selecting under her contract with the Chicago Opera Company the part in which she desired to appear, and chose the heroine of Massenet's opera.

Mr. Savage Explains.

Why did Mr. Savage import any of his "Merry Widow" singers? His stage director, John McKee, answers this question by presenting an array of figures. Since April 22 last McKee has had auditions for 1,723 American singers. He heard 1,171 sopranos, 103 contraltos, 256 tenors, 159 barytones and 34 basses. "A large percentage of these voices,' relates McKee, "were unusually fine. However, they were possessed by boys and girls who were without stage experience and who were not willing to take their experience in anything less than principal parts—for which they were not qualified."

In these modern times the aspirant for light opera or musical comedy must be able to "act, look, sing and dance," as Mr. McKee puts it. Of his 1,723 applicants who could sing about 800 had the necessary appearance, but less than 500 had acting experience and only about 100 could dance.

The shortage of dancers, says McKee, is due to the advice of vocal teachers who tell their pupils that stage dancing ruins the voice. "It is claimed that the breath control is affected by dancing," he explains. "Of course, acrobatic or ballet dancing of a strenuous nature may be taxing to the diaphragm, but the dancing required in most musical comedies, particularly in 'The Merry Widow,' could have no harmful effect on a singer. Most composers know too much to follow a dance with a vocal number, or to combine the two in any strenuous fashion. Nevertheless not only did our young singers confess that they could not dance except in the ballroom but they refused to learn."

Salary a Stumbling Block.

Salary was another stumbling block in Mr. Savage's path. "In the first place," McKee relates, "few of our native applicants would consider small roles. Many of them walked out without a word when we suggested that they join the ensemble. Nearly every American girl who applied for a role in 'The Merry Widow' could see herself in only one role—the Widow.

"Several of these who would, for experience, consent to sing in the ensemble asked salaries of $300 a week. The would-be principals sometimes asked for as much as $800. They figured it out that when they sang in concert they received $100 a performance. Sometimes they sang only three concerts a season. Still $100 was their price, and for eight performances a week in 'The Merry Widow' $800 was the proper figure. It would have been amusing if it had not been so absolutely discouraging. These young Americans needed a jolt; they needed some sense of true valuation. We had to give most of them up as hopeless. After this experience with 1,723 American singers Mr Savage's engagement of four foreign singers for 'The Merry Widow' is not so surprising."

The Rule of Three.

Those enlightened folk the opera singers are a superstitious lot. There is not one among them who does not have perfect faith in the idea that everything follows the rule of three. Indeed, everything goes in threes. It might be added that they are especially prone to believe this succession about death.

It is for that reason that the tenors in the Metropolitan Opera House are considerably upset. Two of their choir, Enrico Caruso and the newly engaged Joseph Mann, have died recently. Who will be the third from their number? This is the question that disturbs them to such a degree that every arriving tenor shows unmistakable signs of the nervous strain through which they are passing.

Bred in the Bone.

The two young actresses, Josephine and Selena Royle, who met with such great success when they appeared first in "Launcelot and Elaine," come rightly by their theatrical aspirations. Their mother, as Selena Fetter, was a well known star for years, and their father, a playwright—he is author of the vastly successful "The Squaw Man"—was also an actor.

But there was no thought of putting the girls on the stage until they decided for themselves that they were going to be actresses. Even then their parents insisted that they came from Missouri and that the young women, who are only nineteen and seventeen, should prove their talent before they were allowed to be actresses. "But how?" they asked in chorus.

Their father, Edwin Milton Royle, was prepared for the question. He had written a play for them called "The Sin of Cinderella." It should be acted by them. He engaged a company, which came to live in the Royle home at Darien, rehearsed all its members and borrowed a set of scenery from Edgar Selwyn. With this equipment the play was produced and the fond parents had to throw up their hands. They acknowledged, as one says in Missouri, the corn. The young women knew what they were about. They demonstrated their fitness for the stage so completely that it is not improbable the two young actresses will make their appearance in "The Sin of Cinderella" as their next attempt.

Pity the Poor Passenger.

The taxi was called on Forty-fourth street, near Sixth avenue, to go to the Shubert Theatre, which is a little more than a block and a half away. It proceeded to Broadway. Only a short distance away the lights of the theatre were shining. But it was not to be reached so easily.

Traffic rules required the taxi to turn north at Forty-fourth street, pass up Seventh avenue to Forty-seventh, wait there until the signal flashed and then proceed westward to Eighth avenue, then down to Forty-fourth street. This convenient way of approaching the playhouse, with only a block and a half to travel, took twenty minutes, and resulted in a charge of fifty cents instead of thirty. Here the blessing of traffic control was most assuredly disguised.

Some of the Best Sellers.

At midnight on Saturday the theatre favorites of the preceding week were said to stand in the following order: "The Circle," "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" and "Six Cylinder Love." But there may be a new success some night this week that will change this order completely.

Giovanni Grasso will act for the benefit of his American colleagues at the Royal Theatre on Tuesday afternoon. Only actors will be present to see him in "Omerta," and the admissions will be by invitation.

Fannie Hurst has finished a second play to be called "Roulette." It deals with the adventures of twins who come here from Russia. One is red headed and the other a brunette, red and black. Thus the title.

Emma Bunting, who was at the head of a stock company at the Fourteenth Street Theatre before it took to the Yiddish drama, is acting "Miss Lulu Bett" in the South this season in order to complete the capital she is acquiring to go into business. Miss Bunting is going to open a shop which makes a specialty of clothes for small women.

BURLESQUE AT COLUMBIA.

At the Columbia Theatre next week Joseph Hurtig will present his new two act burlesque called "Tit for Tat," written by Samuel Morris, with music by H. Shubert. The company is headed by George Niblo and Miss Helen Spencer, singers and dancers, and they are assisted by Johnny O'Donnell, Jimmy Connors, Mando Neri and Eleanor Wilson.

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AT 22 IAN KEITH HAS PLAYED MORE THAN A HUNDRED ROLES

Young Aviator in 'The Silver Fox' With William Faversham Served a Stern Apprenticeship in Stock Companies.

When William Faversham was recently asked who he considered the most promising of the young American actors he said "Ian Keith, without a doubt." Keith, who is playing the role of the young aviator in Faversham's "The Silver Fox," is only 22 years old. Born in Boston, he is a graduate of the Parker School. There he acted *Hamlet* in the graduation play, after studying the part under an old actor, William Uniter.

His first ambition in life was to be a second Charles Dana Gibson, but the Fates chose otherwise, and eventually they directed him into the American Academy, where, in his senior year he played in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." He served a stern apprenticeship in various stock companies, including Henry Jewett's and the famous Castle Square in Boston, playing more than one hundred leading parts. He toured the universities as *Charles Surface* in "The School for Scandal" and later as *Guido* in Maeterlinck's 'Monna Vanna." He finally left on short notice, and travelled from San Antonio, 2,600 miles away, to join Mr. Faversham in "The Silver Fox."

In his dressing room at Maxine Elliott's Theatre Mr. Keith told how the role of the young aviator appealed to him after the very demanding work of playing such a character as *Guido*.

"When a young actor tells a manager he is a 'character' actor," Mr. Keith told the reporter for THE NEW YORK HERALD, "he is likely to be smiled at tolerantly. But sometimes in stock on the road the yearning comes for the time when the juvenile can darken his face and powder his hair and play something besides himself. Therefore I was particularly pleased when the same manager for whom I had played *Charles Surface* gave me the part of *Guido*.

"Now the characters of *Charles Surface* and *Belgrave*, the part I am now playing in Mr. Faversham's production, call for youth, buoyancy and brilliancy, but the character of *Guido* demands the heaviest and most violent passion and dynamic power. The physical aspect of might and age can of course be achieved by makeup proper designing of the costume and controlling the timbre of the voice. But to express the passions and thought of a matured and heavy man when one is half his age and fifty pounds lighter calls for more than externals.

"It demands sincere transition and equal concentration in character. I believe that if one understands how his character thinks and will abandon himself unreservedly to that state of mind and feeling his characterization, with its embellishments of grease paint and long cloaks, will not only convince but create perfect illusion. If then he concentrates sufficiently to remain in that character through any situation, having acquired the 'temperance that will give it smoothness,' he will move his auditors in proportion to the depth of feeling of which he is capable."

MISS PAINTER TELLS THIS ONE.

Miss Eleanor Painter, prima donna o "The Last Waltz," at the Century, likes to relate a story on herself of her student days in Berlin. Immediately upon arrival, realizing that her knowledge of the language was a negligible quantity, she had the landlady of the pension give her the German phrases in which to ask for stationery supplies—pens, ink, paper, &c.—wherewith to write home.

Carefully repeating those phrases over and over all the way from the pension to the shop Miss Painter was delighted when the shopkeeper evinced a perfect understanding of her wants. But she was amazed when that same shopkeeper, wrapping up her small package, asked in perfect English: 'And does the young lady require anything more today?"

Unconceited Club of Playwrights Fails to Last Long

Roi Cooper Megrue First to Resign—A. E. Thomas and W. P. Eaton Last to Go Out.

A. E. Thomas, author of "Only 38," in which Miss Mary Ryan is playing at the Cort Theatre, and Walter Prichard Eaton, who wrote the story on which Mr. Thomas based the play, have had a falling out.

That in itself would be a matter of moment only to themselves except for the fact that through that falling out comes the end of what was probably the most exclusive social organization ever founded in this or any other city, namely, the Unconceited Dramatists Club. It, alas, is no more. At its inception its membership was only five. It was founded at the Players Club. The original membership was composed of Roi Cooper Megrue, Austin Strong, Thompson Buchanan, A. E. Thomas and Walter Prichard Eaton. It may be asked what Eaton was doing in a dramatists' club, unconceited or not. The answer is that the other four members had the notion that the presence of the dramatic critic would be of considerable assistance in keeping them unconceited.

The club prospered for a time and it was even proposed that a club house should be obtained, but this plan was voted impracticable because of the impossibility of finding enough unconceited dramatists to make the project self-sustaining. It may be added, incidentally, that up to this time none of the members had been notably successful. Then Megrue wrote "It Pays to Advertise" and developed symptoms that resulted in his expulsion by a unanimous vote of the others. Next Strong wrote "Three Wise Fools" and liked it so well that he insisted on resigning. Then Buchanan had a play accepted by William A. Brady and promptly became ineligible. That left only Thomas and Eaton. Time ran on. Then Eaton wrote a story and Thomas made the play "Only 38" out of it. Eaton took umbrage because Thomas introduced a character which Eaton held to be alien to the purport of his story.

"Who's conceited now," said Thomas. "For the first time in your life you get your name—or rather I get it for you—on a theatre programme—and well—I'm going to have you thrown out of the club."

Eaton said nothing but acted. He was the president of the Unconceited Dramatists' Club. As president he called a meeting, which Thomas did not attend, and preferred charges against Thomas, alleging the latter's ineligibility on the ground that just before "Only 38" was produced he had bought a new and expensive automobile and, worse yet, after the play had been produced he still retained the automobile. Consequently Eaton voted unanimously to expel Thomas. And then, to make a clean job of it, Eaton himself resigned. And thus the Unconceited Dramatists' Club came to an end.

Thomas says the charges against him were not well founded. He admits the evidence but denies the inference. He says that anyody except a dramatic critic knows there's a big difference between conceit and self confidence. But, anyway, the dear old club has burst and "Only 38" is left.

Skating Before 5,000 Thrills Charlotte

"I am glad, indeed, to be back on the Hippodrome stage," said Charlotte, premier ice skater, the other day. "Some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent here, and nowhere has the art I love so much received such great attention and encouragement.

"Americans are the keenest students of theatricals in the world, and my work, as I thoroughly believe, is essentially dramatic in its nature. True, it is a popular sport, too, but the splendid opportunity it offers for dramatic and interpretative expression implies, if it does not require, the complete setting of the theatrical performance, including stage, audience, music and opportunity for those peculiar effects only possible in a theatre.

"I have skated in all the great ice palaces of Europe, where meals or drinks are served during my performance, and invariably I have felt that the beauty and dignity of my work suffers a great deal where there is movement and noise on the part of the audience.

"To skate before 5,000 persons, stilled to a whisper, so still that even the harp obligato played during my number can be heard in the last seat in the gallery, serves to accentuate the quiet beauty of my chosen medium of entertainment. It thrills me through and through. Never andwhere have I had so perfect environment. I believe I am skating better in the Hippodrome than I ever have anywhere else."

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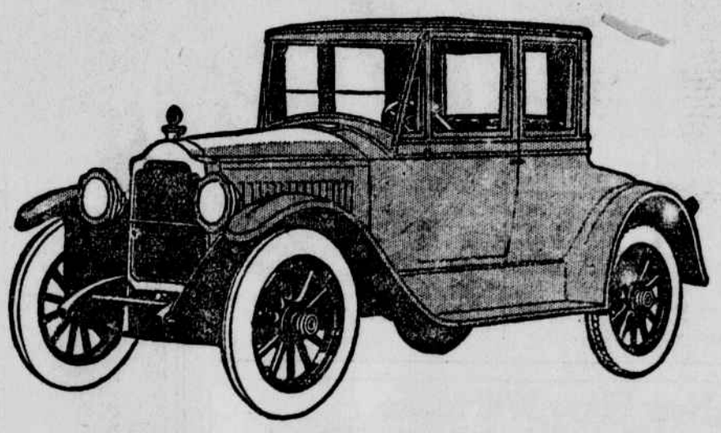

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